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AUGUST, 1913

A WOMAN AT DUSK

**O**NE white hand droops across your knee; you  
stare  
Off into space with shadowy eyes that seem  
To watch a lone horizon dark with rain  
And cities ruinous and seas forlorn  
Of sun and movement.

Like a dead leaf stirs  
That listless hand, and then grows still again,  
And round your chin, the soft and child-like chin  
As delicate as dew, a ghostly sigh  
Hovers and then is gone.

Serene and broad  
Your white brow is beneath its banded hair;  
Serene the bosom that so softly breathes;  
Serene the milk-white throat that moves no more  
Than marble moves, the gently hollowed cheek;  
Serene, too, seems the body grown so still  
And drooping like a wing out-wearied by  
Too many homing seas.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Ah, calm it seems,  
But at some mystic core a mystic fire  
Still burns, the ruby tumult of the blood  
Still leaves it perilous, still played upon  
By ghostly fingers from forgotten tombs!  
Serene you seem to wait, yet round your eyes  
So blue with weariness, a trouble lurks;  
Behind the honeyed corners of your mouth  
Left tremulous with passion, wakes and stirs  
A protest. Close about the parted lips,  
Rose-red and woman-weak and warm,  
Broods something over-tense, a wistfulness  
That has not been appeased, a hidden note  
Of hunger that has gone unsatisfied,  
A question tragical, a startled cry  
Unanswered, and a thought that cannot sleep.  
Out of the gloom I see your white face yearn  
As silence yearns for music, or the sea  
For morning waits. A mirrored wonderment,  
A far-off glory, from you flashes and shines  
And then is gone, as in a casement burns  
The sunset gold. And still you scarcely move,  
And speak no word, and passive droop the hands  
That in their listless movements stirred so like  
A little child's, and all the weariness  
Of all the world seems weighing on your soul.  
Out of the ages gaze your brooding eyes,  
And barrier gulfs of time between us drift,

*A Woman at Dusk*

And shadow-like you face the shadowy night  
Above earth's sleeping hills, and converse hold  
With hidden things.

And I watch desolate  
Beside you; I, who but an hour ago  
Seemed one with you in flesh and spirit, I  
Must sit alone and lonely see you mourn,  
And feel again still close some iron door  
Between your soul and mine. For still you wait  
Half-wearily content with discontent,  
Still idle with unrest you idly watch.  
Calm with a fever that o'er fiercely burns  
And saddened with a joy too keen to endure,  
You stare off into space and say no word.  
But from those unassuaged and shadowy lips  
I catch some echo of the timeless quest.  
I hear your spirit's whisper that all life  
Is nothing, that from sleep to sleep we move  
And know not where we go, that through the dark  
Your groping hands seek something not of mist  
And moonlight, that amid the endless cold  
You crave some keen and momentary warmth,  
Some glory more than earthly glory ask,  
The wine that reddens ocean foam where far  
To straining eyes the darkling waters reach,  
The wine that Twilight drinks from paling rose  
And leaf, the wine that tender April pours  
Across the morning world, the selfsame wine

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

That sends October singing down the hills  
And wakens in the sunburnt breast of youth  
The wonder and the lyric ache of love.  
For life's last gift of rapture you cry out  
And will not be denied, for one great flash  
Of splendor through earth's glooms inglorious.  
Lone as a lute your pleading voice invokes  
Companionship, your luring body calls  
For secret consummations, for the kiss  
Enkindling, and the tangled joy and grief  
Of having given much. You question not  
Time's course uncomprehended. Childishly  
You yield yourself, and in return demand  
Only that you be taken. On the winds  
Of fire you make a bed wherein to rest.  
Humbled and helpless on man's will you wait,  
The appointed vessel, and the lamp ordained,  
The hour predestined, and the dream fulfilled.  
As women give, you give, accepting naught  
But your own bosom's grim necessity  
Of being crushed. Across the ghostly years,  
Where nothing may endure beyond the grave,  
You cry that love must last; you grow content  
With soft capitulation. Yet your hour  
Of wayward triumph knows the chill of tombs,  
Your dusky-lidded eyes are dark with tears,  
Your softest words are saddened with the knell  
Your own sad heart makes vocal.

*A Woman at Dusk*

Then you cling  
To me and ask if Death could vanquish love,  
And cry that I must keep you for all time.  
But pitiful it seems; for as you speak  
The shadow falls, the rapture melts away,  
The light upon the darkling sea-line fails,  
And soft as mist between your soul and mine  
The solemn wonder widens. So you sit  
In astral silence, watching still for that  
Which never comes. In utter weariness  
You wait, with that last emptiness of soul  
Which leaves you shadowy-eyed and bowed with grief,  
Yet veiled in wayward beauty, creeping back  
And crowning you with wonder.

Mystical  
You suddenly become, and mystical  
The thrice-sealed message and the woman-thirst  
That draws you passive to the shores of pain,  
That flings you broken from the seas of dream,  
And in surrender causes you to reap!  
Enriched your body grows with ichors strange  
And of the gods you seem, and infinite  
You are, because of infinite desires:  
A something to be sought of land and sea,  
And sheltered tenderly, and sorrowed for,  
And made the bearer of the final cruse.  
For desolate my soul cries out again  
And all your body with its crown of grief

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Wakes with an answering cry, and as you sit  
With one white hand across your huddled knees  
My lips seek out your lips of mortal rose,  
And tremulous you yield, and from the pain  
Of utter sacrifice still garner joy.  
Then burns the flame anew; then glows once more  
The momentary splendor; then the tide  
Sings back into its sea, and then the rose  
Is full, and all the throats of song are soft!  
But soon the voices fail, and soon we know  
How keenly fugitive the glimpse, how close  
The shadow is, how bitter-sweet the end;  
And being mortal, how our mortal love  
Only on winds of fire may find relief,  
And from the rise and fall of passion's tides  
Still catch at some forlorn tranquillity!

*Arthur Stringer.*